

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
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AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS
USCINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 0146

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: CONGRESS PRESSURE ON CPI CONTINUES

REF: 76 NEW DELHI 18576

1. ACRIMONIOUS EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE CONGRESS AND
THE CPI HAVE CONTINUED SINCE MRS GANDHI'S SHARP ATTACK
ON THE COMMUNISTS ON DECEMBER 23, 1976 (REFTEL). IT IS
APPARENT THAT MRS GANDHI'S STRATEGY IS TO HUMBLE THE CPI
RATHER THAN TO PROVOKE AN OPEN BREAK BETWEEN THE TWO
PARTIES. TO THIS END, SHE SOUGHT TO TONE DOWN SLIGHTLY
HER DECEMBER 23-24 REMARKS DURING A DECEMBER 27 ADDRESS
TO CONGRESSMEN AT HER RESIDENCE. SAYING THAT ALTHOUGH
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IT WAS TRUE THAT THE CPI HAD SPPORTED THE BRITISH DURING
WORLD WAR II, THE PARTY HAD NOT REPUDIATED THE CONCEPT
OF INDEPENDENCE AND WAS NOT AN ENEMY OF INDIA. CLAIMING
THAT HER RECENT REMARKS ABOUT THE CPI WERE NOTHING NEW,
THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED THAT THE ONLY NEW ELEMENT WAS HER
COMMENT ON THOSE WHO ALLEGED THAT SHE WAS BEING INFLUENCED
BY OTHER PEOPLE. THE MAIN THRUST OF HER REMARKS ON THIS

OCCASION WAS DIRECTED AGAINST PARTIES OF THE RIGHT (JAN SANGH, RSS AND SWANTANTRA).

2. DESPITE THE RPIME MINISTER'S BACKPEDALING, STATE-LEVEL CONGRESS AND YOUTH CONGRESS LEADERS HAVE PICKED UP HER EARLIER CUE AND CONTINUED THEIR RANDOM SNIPING AGAINST THE CPI. SEVERAL CHIEF MINISTERS (INCLUDING PUNJAB'S ZAIL SINGH AND HARYANA'S B.D. GUPTA) HAVE IN THE LAST WEEK WARNED THE COMMUNISTS NOT TO ENGAGE IN AGITATION IN CONJUNCTION WITH THEIR FIVE-POINT PROGRAM AGAINST PRICE INCREASES, AND SEVERAL YOUTH CONGRESS LEADERS HAVE ALREADY DARKLY HINTED THAT THE CPI SHOULD BE BANNED AS AN "ANTI-NATIONAL ASSOCIATION."

3. CPI GENERAL SECRETARY RAJESWARA RAO REBUTTED MRS GANDHI'S DECEMBER 23 ATTACK IN A SIGNED ARTICLE IN THE JANUARY 2 ISSUE OF THE PARTY ORGAN "NEW AGE." CLAIMING THAT THE CPI SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO CONCUR IN ALL OF THE RULING PARTY'S ACTIONS, RAO AFFIRMED THAT THE CPI WOULD PERSIST IN ITS LONG-TIME POLICY OF SUPPORTING "PROGRESS-IVE" GOI POLICIES WHILE OPPOSING THOSE POLICIES WHICH "GO AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY." HE SAID HE WAS UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHY CRITICISM OF CERTAIN GOVERNMENT POLICIES SHOULD BE CONSTRUED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AS PERSONAL CRITICISM OF HERSELF. HE CLAIMED THAT THE CPI HAD NEVER DESCRIBED SANJAY GANDHI'S FIVE-POINT PROGRAM AS BEING REACTIONARY, BUT HIS PARTY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS PROGRAM CAN SOLVE THE COUNTRY'S BASIC SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. (COMMENT: THIS IS SOPHISTRY: CONFIDENTIAL

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RAO HIMSELF HAD CHARACTERIZED AS "REACTIONARY" THE GIST OF SANJAY'S PROGRAM IN A NOVEMBER ARTICLE IN "NEW AGE" BUT WITHOUT MENTIONING "FIVE POINT" OR SANJAY'S NAME.) ONLY THE PRIME MINISTER'S 20-POINT PROGRAM CAN DO THIS, RAO SAID, WHICH IS WHY THE CPI HAD CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED IT. IT WAS UNFORTUNATE, RAO ADDED, THAT "REACTIONARY VESTED INTERESTS" HAD SABOTAGED THE PROGRAM'S IMPELEMNTATION THROUGH CORRUPT OFFICIALS AND "ELEMENTS IN THE RULING PARTY CONNECTED WITH THESE REACTIONARY VESTED INTERESTS." IN ADDITION, COMPULSORY STERILIZATION UNDER THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM HAD ALSO OBSTRUCTED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S PROGRAM. RAO CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT HIS PARTY'S OWN FIVE-POINT PROGRAM TO ARREST RISING PRICES AS A COMPLEMENT TO THE 20-POINT PROGRAM. AS FOR ALLEGED COLLABORATION WITH THE BRITISH DURING THE AR, RAO REHASHED THE CPI'S POSITION AT THE TIME AND WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE CPI DID COOPERATE WITH THE BRITISH, ADDED THAT HIS PARTY WAS "SECOND TO NONE" IN ITS LOVE OF COUNTRY.

4. OTHER CPI LEADERS AROUND THE COUNTRY HAVE PICKED UP THIS THEME INREBUTTING ATTACKS FROM CONGRESSMEN, MOST OF THEM TAKING THE LINE THAT THE PARTY DOES NOT OPPOSE THE YOUTH CONGRESS' FIVE-POINT PROGRAM, BUT THAT THIS PROGRAM SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN PRIORITY OVER THE 20-POINT PROGRAM.

5. RAO'S WAFFLING "NEW AGE" ARTICLE SEEMS TO REPRESENT A SLIGHT RETREAT IN THE CPI'S CRITICISM OF SANJAY AND THE YOUTH CONGRESS PROGRAM. NONETHELESS, HIS REFERENCE TO "ELEMENTS IN THE RULING PARTY CONNECTED WITH REACTIONARY VESTED INTERESTS" IS SURE TO RAISE CONGRESS HACKLES. THE PARTY HAS SHOWN NO SIGNS OF BACKING OFF FROM ITS ANTI-PRICE RISE CAMPAIGN WHICH WAS LAUNCHED ON JANUARY 1 BUT IT SEEMS TO BE PURSUING ITS EFFORT SOMEWHAT GINGERLY IN PRACTICE. DESPITE THIS, "NEW AGE" REPORTS THAT 66 CPI WORKERS (INCLUDING FOUR MLA'S) HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN U.P. CONFIDENTIAL

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IN CONJUNCTION WITH AGITATIONS, AND A RECENT TRAVELLER REPORTS SIMILAR ARRESTS OF COMMUNIST CADRE IN BBIHAR.

6. COMMENT: DESPITE THE SLIGHT BACKPEDALING STATEMENTS BY MRS GANDHI AND GENERAL SECRETARY RAO, CONGRESS ATTACKS ON THE CPI ARE CONTINUING AND IT APPEARS THAT FOR THE PRESENT THERE ARE NO INSTRUCTIONS OUT TO SLOW DOWN THE ANTI-CPI OFFENSIVE, ALTHOUGH PRESSURE IS LIKELY TO BE CONCENTRATED IN THE STATES RATHER THAN IN STATEMENTS OUT OF DELHI. IN BIHAR (A CENTER OF COMMUNIST POWER) THE PC PRESIDENT HAS GOTTEN DOWN TO SPECIFICS THIS WEEK AND CHARGED THE CPI WITH "VIOLATION OF AGREEMENTS AND ABUSE OF TRUST" IN CONNECTION WITH THE 1971 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. HE CLAIMED THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD DEFIED AN ELECTORAL ADJUSTMENT PACT WITH THE CONGRESS AND HAD CONTESTED 14 INSTEAD OF EIGHT SEATS FOR THE LOK SABHA. WE EXPECT SIMILAR CHARGES AND TOUGH ANTI-CPI MOVES IN THOSE STATES WHERE LOCAL CONGRESS ENTHUSIASM FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SETTLE OLD ACCOUNTS WITH THE CPI IS HIGH. SCHNIEDER

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